

*January 21, 2010 House Committee on Natural Resources Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands*

*Washington, DC* - The following is Congressman Maurice Hinchey's (D-NY) prepared testimony for today's House Natural Resources Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands legislative hearing on H.R. 4003, the Hudson River Valley Special Resource Study Act. Hinchey authored the bill, which would authorize the National Park Service (NPS) to conduct a study on whether the Hudson River Valley should become a unit of the National Park system.

In order to become part of the National Park System, a congressionally-authorized NPS study must be conducted. Hinchey's legislation would authorize such a study from Fort Edward in Washington County down through Westchester County. If the NPS's study finds that the Hudson River Valley would be a good fit as part of the National Park System then subsequent legislation would be needed to make that designation. Hinchey said he would immediately introduce the necessary legislation.

Hinchey's bill outlines specific guidelines to ensure that the NPS study recognizes the realities of the Hudson River Valley. These guidelines require the NPS to closely examine park unit models, in particular national river and recreation areas, as well as other landscape protection models, that: encompass large areas of non-federal lands within their designated boundaries; foster public and private collaborative arrangements for achieving NPS objectives, and protect and respect the rights of private land owners. No forced land acquisition activities would be permitted.

"Thank you Mr. Chairman for including the Hudson River Valley Special Resource Study Act, H.R. 4003, on today's agenda. This bill would authorize the National Park Service to conduct a special resource study of the Hudson River Valley to evaluate the national significance of the area; and the suitability of designating the area as a unit of the National Park System.

"This legislation is cosponsored by each of the members whose district is within the proposed study area and it has garnered strong support locally. I'd like to take this opportunity to ask unanimous consent to insert into the record a list of 21 local organizations that have endorsed this bill. The Hudson River Valley is one of the most significant river corridors in the country. The historical, natural, cultural, scenic, and recreational resources spread throughout the region

are unparalleled.

"The Hudson River Valley's landscapes are known around the world. Their beauty inspired one of America's great artistic movements, the Hudson River School. Painters such as Thomas Cole and Frederic Church immortalized the region's scenery for generations to come. But just as importantly their works, along with the writings of Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson, inspired the American preservationist movement and, many argue, the movement to establish national parks.

"The region's natural resources are not limited to sweeping landscapes. The Hudson River is home to a rich and sensitive ecosystem that sustains more than 200 types of fish, 19 kinds of rare birds, and 140 rare plants. The upper reaches of the estuary are also flanked by extremely rare wetlands.

"There are ample recreational opportunities including hiking, canoeing, and other activities. One of the most recent additions is the Walkway Over the Hudson Bridge. Initially a rail bridge that was considered a marvel of the Industrial Revolution, it was abandoned in the 1970s following a fire. It has recently been restored and reopened this past October. It is now the longest pedestrian overpass in the country.

"From a historical perspective, the Hudson River Valley has played a central role in our nation's narrative and development. In 1609, Henry Hudson first sailed up the river that now bears his name. During the American Revolution, several of the most crucial battles and events took place in the Hudson River Valley. From the victorious Battle of Saratoga in 1777 to the loss of West Point when Benedict Arnold betrayed the colonialists, the region is filled with sites that determined the course of the war and the establishment of our nation.

"In the 19th century, the Hudson River Valley helped foster the American industrial revolution. In 1807, Robert Fulton piloted the first successful steamboat voyage up the river. Later in the century, the Hudson and its estuary, the Mohawk River, connected the country's greatest port, New York, with the west through the Erie Canal network.

"In the last century, the region was home to Franklin Delano Roosevelt at Hyde Park. Later, the region gave birth to the modern environmental movement when Con Edison was prevented

from carving up Storm King Mountain for a generator project.

"Preserving and promoting the Hudson River Valley's resources has been a top priority for me dating back to my time in the New York State Assembly. While in the state legislature, I authored legislation that led to the creation of the Hudson River Valley Greenway, creating a process for voluntary regional cooperation among 264 communities within 13 counties that border the Hudson River. When I came to Congress, I authored legislation that led to the designation of the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area, which provides technical assistance to local communities or local managers to assist them in managing natural and historic sites of national importance. These have provided tremendous benefits to the Hudson Valley region, but it is clear that more needs to be done to protect, preserve and promote the areas unique resources.

"In 2009, we celebrated the 400th anniversary of the Henry Hudson's maiden voyage. As part of that celebration, people from all across the region are coming together to discuss how we can best preserve the many wonderful treasures that are spread throughout our area for future generations. Authorizing a special resource study is central to that process.

"Thank you again. I look forward to working with this Committee to move this important legislation forward."